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TO: AF - Steve McIlvaine

FROM: INR - Rick Ehrenreich

SUBJECT: Your Request: UNAMIR: What is It Good For?

UNAMIR serves several purposes:

-- It provides 5,500 expensive human rights monitors operating throughout the country.

-- UNAMIR personnel also are military monitors and political monitors who give us a somewhat different perspective on Rwanda than would PVOs and "pure" human rights monitors.

-- Because of its size, its mandate and its political neutrality in Rwandan politics, UNAMIR also serves as an effective, unbiased security force serving all aspects of society, including Hutus, Tutsis and foreigners, including NGOs. I am sure that their mere presence, in combination with the presence of NGOs has contributed significantly to bringing stability to the country since August and limiting RPF/RPA/Tutsi human rights abuses and perhaps Hutu attacks as well.

-- Because of the above point, very few refugees would return to Tutsi-dominated Rwanda unless the UNAMIR security blanket is present. If we are serious about encouraging refugee return, we don't want to pull out UNAMIR. Now, having said that, I personally do not think most of the refugees would return in any case. Whatever Twagiramungu or Bizimungu says, the political forces in Rwanda for keeping them out so they don't try to reclaim their now-inhabited property are very strong. But, without UNAMIR, even fewer will return. To go further, I would not be surprised to see at least a small increase in new refugees, though I would not predict this.

-- If we have a serious, ambitious game plan in Rwanda for encouraging its internal political development, then UNAMIR could be a useful tool. If we do not - and, given the current political realities, I doubt we do - then pull them out, though maybe not all at once. Rwanda is, after all, Rwanda: a small African state in which we have no economic or geopolitical interest.

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